

Obedience to the Missionary Vision

by Richard W. Abberley

The missionary vision is a call to heroic faith and hope, with a vision of service and a world-wide reign of God's Messiah.

Scripture: Proverbs 29:18, Matthew 28:19, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 9:22, Philipians 2:3

Topics: "Global Evangelism", "Missions Vision"

Description

Richard W. Abberley preaches about Paul's vision of a glorious Christ and a world redeemed by His blood, emphasizing the importance of having a vision for the world-wide reign of God's Messiah. The sermon highlights the potential of American civilization and its type of religion to dominate the religions of the world, stressing the significance of America's institutions and ideals in shaping the future. The sermon also addresses the need to recognize and address the spiritual and moral needs of America, focusing on the importance of evangelizing cities and reaching out to the diverse foreign population in the country.

Transcript

Bellefield Church, Thursday Afternoon, October 14.

Paul's vision was twofold: first, of a glorious Christ; second, of a world redeemed by his blood. His vision splendid led him on to countless sacrifices and heroic service, till death crowned him a martyr to the cause. Every intelligent lover of Christ has had a vision of the world-wide reign of God's Messiah. As Tennyson sang:

"I dipt into the future far as human eye could see,

Saw the vision of the world and all the wonders that should be."

In that wondrous vision, which is based on faith in God's never-failing promises, and which surpasses the loftiest flights of the poet's fancy, we see India, China, Japan, Africa, yea,

"Every kindred, tribe and tongue

On this terrestrial ball,

To Him all majesty ascribe

And crown him Lord of all."

Nothing less is the program of Jesus. "The seed is the word of God, the field is the world." The supreme factor in this world-wide enterprise is the Christian conquest of America. Unless all signs fail, the most potent force in humanity's upward march to the golden age of the future will be American civilization, and that type of religion that prevails on this continent will dominate the religions of the world. Such is the promise and possibility of this great enterprise, that it charms the soul of the dullest man. First, in this vision of the world's spiritual conquest, we see America the richest, ripest, most responsive, and withal the most potential in future possibilities for the world's evangelization of any mission field on earth. To expatiate upon the greatness of our country, its wealth and [209] territorial resources, seems all but futile, and yet our national expansion has only just begun.

During the century our population increased seventy-one millions. Our national wealth is increasing at the rate of thirteen millions every day. No one is prophet enough to predict the future development of our country and its power as a factor in the civilization and Christianization of the world. But let us make no mistake here. The

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magnificence of this field, and our power as a nation in the world's future Christianization, lies not in our material resources, not in the vast extent of our national domain, nor in our favorable situation in the Temperate Zone, nor in our strategic position between the Occident and Orient, facing Europe on the East, facing Asia on the West, nor in our farms and factories, mills and mines, shops and sky-scrapers, railroads and steamships, nor in our inventive genius and aggressive spirit of commercialism, nor in our wheatfields and corn crops and cotton belts, but in our institutions and ideals, and the moral and spiritual aspirations of our people. It is a nation's ideals that make it great, and make it live.

The paramount importance of saving America stands in the fact that American ideals, the ideals of the purest Anglo-Saxon Christian civilization, are destined to rule the world's future. What nation can boast of institutions to surpass ours? Our free education, making us a nation of trained thinkers and workers, is unexcelled the world around; our free church, liberated from the bondage and curse of State alliance, is the pride of the earth; in no country in the world can a man speak out his own thoughts and have a right to his own opinions with as perfect freedom as here; our press is untrammelled and uncensored; our free ballot in the hands of our citizens is the scepter of a more than kingly dignity; our standards of manhood and womanhood are nearer the Christ ideal under the free flag of America than under any banner that floats in the breezes of heaven.

It is because of her ideals and institutions that we love this land and believe in her manifest destiny.

The evangelization of America can not be accomplished unless we have a clear vision of

THE NATION'S SPIRITUAL AND MORAL NEEDS.

We must see the darkness as well as the light, the perils as well as the possibilities, the vices as well as the virtues of our people, the shame as well as the glory of the nation. We must see that what America needs most is not railroad extension and Western irrigation, not tariff reduction and a bigger wheat crop, not a merchant marine and a new navy, but purer morals, cleaner lives, holier service. To this end we must have

A CLEAR VISION OF THE NEEDS OF THE CITIES.

The problem of saving the cities is doubtless the greatest problem of modern evangelization, and calls for the consecrated wisdom, sacrifice and courage of Christians everywhere. The cities are the nerve centers of the nation. Population is concentrated here. As in a river everything sets toward the whirlpool, so, in the broad, deep current of our national life, all the population seems to be setting toward the city. Here are vast aggregations of humanity, fomenting and intensifying evil. Here are the centers of culture, art and progress. In the conflict of commercial interest, manhood counts for little here. Character is only a commodity with a cash value. Human labor is bartered for with no more conscience than oxen or pig-iron. Here the menace of extreme wealth exists side by side with direst poverty.

Confronted as the church of America is to-day with the gigantic evils of the modern city, our business is not like Elijah, to sit down under the juniper-tree of pessimistic despair, but like Joshua in the courage of the Lord's anointed, to sound the trumpet of [210] advance and go forward against these modern Jerichos, and the barriers of Satan will fall and God's host will march up to victory.

Our Home Board calls for help to sustain the work already begun, and to open new missions at strategic points in our great cities. To retreat here is unquestionable.

"To fail would be disloyalty,

To falter would be sin."

Nothing can save the city but the gospel of the Son of God. Not culture, not art, not legislative reform, not socialism, not Rockefeller universities, not Carnegie libraries, but the Christianity of Christ.

Then, too, we must see the needs of our foreign population.

In the last ten years the gates of the republic have swung open to the march of ten million immigrants, coming to find new homes in the confines of the United States. Our evangelistic problem is infinitely complicated by this multiplicity of races. The seriousness of the problem has increased of late years because of the difference in the character of the emigrant stream. Up to 1880, only one immigrant in one hundred came from southern Europe--the ninety-nine came from Great Britain, Scandinavia, Germany, and they were Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon in race. In recent years the leading races are from southern and eastern Europe, a people whose ideals and institutions and habits of living and religion are vastly different from ours. The early immigrants were easy to Americanize, the last are vastly more difficult. Some say let Uncle Sam shut the door, keep them out, dam up the stream. I venture to say he never will. He may and will shut the door on some, those who are not in sympathy with our institutions, to whom liberty means license, freedom means crime, and who come to swell the ranks of the anarchists, the discontented and the vicious. But there are foreigners and foreigners. Go back far enough and we are all "Aliens," and the great body of these new people who come to our shores seek refuge from political and social oppression, come seeking a better government, a better country, a wider liberty, and in the name of the forefathers, who dedicated this land to Christ and liberty, let us welcome them. We have opened our doors, let us treat them hospitably. Let us give them the best we have. Not only our dollars, our corrupt politics, our bad whisky, but our liberty, our education, our Bibles, our saving Christ. As John Bright, the great English Commoner, said, "Education and freedom are the only sources of true happiness among the people." Every foreigner landing on our shores is a new evangelistic opportunity.

"It is certain that only as the world's Christ and his Christianity dominate, mould and ornament the motley life of this country, can there be safety for the nation and a united civilization for its fast increasing

millions." Christ, and he only, can mould this nation into one.

The call of the American Christian Missionary Society is for more reapers to bring in golden sheaves from earth's richest harvest-fields. We are a great people numbering 1,300,000, but what are these among 85,000,000 of population, with 45,000,000 unchurched and unchristian people in America? One-half of America is yet missionary territory. In only eight States out of forty-three is our own work self-supporting--all the rest of the United States is to us mission territory. We pride ourselves, and justly, on the marvelous progress of a hundred years, but with Cecil Rhodes, of Africa, the man with empires in his brain, on his dying-bed, we can say, "So little done, so much undone."

The East spells for us in big letters "neglected opportunity." In the Empire State of New York, in forty-two counties out of sixty, we have neither church nor mission. In New England, the richest and most densely populated part of our country, we are nearly an unknown people--our churches are few, scattered and unknown. The Pacific Coast, while the scene of many victories, is still one of the greatest and most pressing of mission fields. There is the vast territory we call the Inland Empire, where irrigation is making the desert to bloom, and the wilderness to blossom as the rose. Wyoming, a State larger than Illinois and Indiana, with only five churches; the great State of Utah, with an area greater than Ohio, [211] Kentucky and Rhode Island, wonderfully rich and wonderfully wicked, the home of America's disgrace--Mormonism--with only one church of our faith; Idaho, as big as Pennsylvania and Ohio put together, with mountains of copper, silver and gold, with people pouring in by tens of thousands, but few missionaries; and that land of golden opportunity, the great Southwest, with Texas, New Mexico and Arizona, with their crowds of new settlers, new cities springing up like dreams of the night, vast cattle ranges being divided into farms--from all these promising fields the calls come persistent, loud and reiterated for help. While we wait for gifts, golden opportunities slip from our grasp and men perish without Christ. What does it mean? It means

THAT THE MISSIONARY VISION IS A VISION OF SERVICE.

The royal law of Christ's kingdom is threefold--love, sacrifice, service. The church exists not to save itself, but to save the nation. The church that loses its evangelistic spirit loses its mission and its message. Churches only prosper as they heal and save. The church wins as it magnetizes, not as it dogmatizes. Not fine architecture, artistic music, pompous ceremonials, gorgeous vestments, or orthodox dogma, but the cure of souls, practical benevolence, deeds of charity and love are the supreme test of the church's right to live. "He saved others," cried the jeering mob on Calvary, "himself he can not save." If he had, he could not have saved others. "He that saveth his life shall lose it, he that loseth his life shall find it." As we give, we live; as we go, we grow. The church that saves itself by erecting costly buildings in the aristocratic suburbs, moving away from the toiling masses, and hears not the cry of God's children fallen among thieves on the Jericho road of sin, is false to its Lord, and over its threshold will be yet found written "Ichabod"--her glory is departed.

Lastly, the missionary vision is

A VISION OF HOPE AND VICTORY.

Because the evangelization of America is truly a stupendous problem, it calls for heroic faith and hope. As in old Canaan, there are giants in the land--giant evils to dispute the advance of God's host--overcrowding in the cities, child-labor in the factories, bitter antagonism between capital and labor, millions of unassimilated foreigners, a race of ignorant negroes, corrupt politics in State and nation. But in this dark

picture of perils, the man of hope and faith in God sees the bright rainbow of promise. There are not lacking in America the signs of a great moral and spiritual awakening. The new spirit of social reform, the cleansing of city governments, the mighty tidal wave of temperance sweeping over the land, the movement of the churches toward union, and, among our own people, the increased giving for missions and education, mean that the highest hopes of God's saints, their most glorious visions, are soon to be realized.

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